

HB 277

EXHIBIT 1
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Winifred, Montana

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Madam Chairman, members of the Committee—For the record I am Ed Butcher—Winifred.

I am surprise again to see these anti-term limits bills surface in the face of the most popular grass-roots public support of any political issue. Term Limits is only hated by lobbyists, bureaucrats, and politicians who do not want to go home and become professional legislators for the rest of their lives. Let's look at the history of Term Limits.

In 1992 I was elected Chairman of Montanans for Term Limits; we easily collected signatures to put this initiative on the ballot. It easily passed with 67% of the votes. It was also a National movement with 18 states passing Initiatives and 3 other states passing statutory Term Limits by initiative with large voter margins.

Within a few years the State legislators in the statutory states overturned it by large margins. However in states with Constitutional Term Limits the special interests spent millions of dollars trying to get voter reversals, but voters (including California) continually rejected these attempts.

In Montana the 2003 legislature referred a referendum to extend the legislative terms to 12 years which was soundly defeated by 69% of Montana voters—a 2% increase over the original vote in the face of continual attacks on term limits by front pages and editorial pages of all the media as well as a big contingency of legislators all blaming all the problems of governing the State on Term Limits causing the loss of "institutional memory...Etc."

I have always maintained you can judge the character and merits of an issue by the opponents. Since the voters continually demonstrate over-whelming support, let's review who is actually opposed to Term Limits: (1) Special interest Lobbyists who are continually frustrated having to "re-educate" new groups of legislators who are naturally suspicious of their motivations, (2) the bureaucracy which does not have the time to develop supporters of their agencies in the Legislators and each session have to defend their growing budgets and new programs to suspicious legislators; and (3) of course the elected officials who by eight years begin to think they are indispensable and have grown to like power and do not want to go home. Power and control takes years to achieve and legislators long for the good old pre-term limit days when half dozen legislators negotiated and through political trading have maneuvered themselves into control.

My first career was as a political history professor researching and teaching courses on the political process which is fascinating to observe how a handful of strong individuals manipulate themselves into control. In the 1960s and 1970s, I spent time observing the North Dakota political process where elected officials basically die in office or go to a nursing home. During the 1980's and 1990's, I spent a lot of time hanging around the Montana Legislature watching the power structure operate—both as Democrat controlled and Republican controlled. I have to admit that it was a lot more fun when J.D. Lynch, Red Manahan, and the rest of the Butte boys were in power and the rest of the legislators spent most of their time partying and waiting marching orders. Of course if a Legislator crossed the

leadership—they did not get committee assignments or their legislation passed—basically locked in a closet until those who were independent thinkers left in disgust. Speaking of parties and closets, J.D. had a key to his private liquor closet on the 3rd floor which he would stop at and reward his friends with a little shot on the way to afternoon committee hearings—this is institutional memory!

I believed that the voters deserved a better legislative environment and during my ten years in the legislature I have watched the fresh ideas and energy which all of you in this room have brought to this body because of Term Limits. Yes, we may have more division in policy because you are representing your constituents' concerns. Before you jump on the anti-term limit bandwagon, you should consider that most of you would not be here if it were not for Term Limits and those replaced were not indispensable.

When we drafted Term-Limits, we carefully constructed this system not to deny anyone the right to serve in the legislature for as long as you want—you only have to change houses each 8 years which accomplishes our goal of breaking up a corrupt power system. Most important it opens the process for new legislators to compete for open seats.

All you have to look at is the corrupted process in Washington which has a public approval of less than 20% to understand why we need term limits. The tens of millions of dollars would not be spent in Montana by special interests to protect their investment if Congress were term limited. I know both Baucus and Tester and I can assure you that anyone in this body can easily do as well as those two in the U.S. Senate, but anyone of you would have to find a special interest group to put five to ten million dollars minimum behind your candidacy. Incumbents are extremely difficult to defeat since statistically 98% of incumbents are re-elected—so much for the ridiculous statement that elections term-limit.

This Term Limit bill before this committee is the worst of the anti-term limit proposals. To begin with it would bring back the old power structures and the control of lobbyists and bureaucrats in a corrupt environment. Sixteen years is the same as no term limits—once anyone has served 8 years they have also used up most of their energy and ideas. Half way through the first session, a legislator is up to speed and fresh ideas is most important. More is the concern of having a life-time ban on the bright young legislators in this body after their 16 years. It is good to have former legislators return in later years to bring their world experiences back into this body—Rep O'Hare is an example of a former legislator bringing his expertise back to a future legislature twenty years later and as my seat mate during my last session, I appreciated his insight.

Let's summarize the politics which will be involved in this issue—I would ask each of the legislators if they really want to run for office with a vote against term limits in favor of "Professional Politicians." It might be a little uncomfortable being blasted in their local media over this vote when nearly 70% of the voters strongly support limits on their elected officials. It could be difficult for a candidate to tell his voters that they are not smart enough to understand how important the candidate is to the political system. Check what happened in the 2004 Montana primary to anti-term limit candidates trying to explain their vote on this issue and explain why they want to bring the mess voters despise in D.C. to

Montana politics. Several incumbents did not survive their primary in the face of the 69% vote against their term limit vote.

In conclusion I would urge this Committee to table this mis-guided legislation supporting egotistical politicians who think they are indispensable and supporting the frustrated special interest groups who want hand-picked legislators to advance their agenda's at the expense of Montana voters and taxpayers.